

Appendix III: Rules for Punctuation

CAPITAL LETTERS

A capital letter is used:

- to begin a sentence.
e.g. *There's a great film playing at the cinema.*
- for days of the week, months and public holidays.
e.g. *This year, **Christmas Day** falls on the last **Sunday** of **December**.*
- for names of people and places.
e.g. My best friend's name is **C**laire and she's from **C**ardiff, **W**ales.
- for people's titles.
e.g. **M**r and **M**rs Graham; **D**r Stevens; **P**rofessor Brown; etc.
- for nationalities and languages.
e.g. *They are **F**rench.*
*We love **I**talian cuisine.*
*He's fluent in **P**ortuguese and **G**erman.*
- for the first word and/or the most important words (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) of titles of books, films, plays, TV programmes, etc.
e.g. *The **S**ixth **S**ense*
*Indiana **J**ones and the **L**ost **T**emple*
*Alice in **W**onderland*

Note: The personal pronoun **I** is always a capital letter.
e.g. *George and **I** are going to the funfair.*

FULL STOP (.)

A full stop is used:

- to end a sentence that is not a question or an exclamation.
e.g. *I'm having a wonderful time. There's so much to do here.*

ITALICS

Italics are used:

- to show the titles of books, plays, newspapers, films, etc.
e.g. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*
Romeo and Juliet
The Daily Mail
Braveheart
- to show names of hotels, restaurants, etc.
e.g. *The Majestic Hotel*
Cleo's Grill House

COMMA (,)

A comma is used:

- to separate words in a list.
e.g. *We need eggs, milk, cheese and butter.*
- to separate phrases or clauses.
e.g. *He stopped walking, looked down, and realised that he was still wearing his slippers.*
- to separate long sentences linked by *and*, *but*, *as*, *or*, etc.
e.g. *Susan had a very bad cold, **but** she still went to the party.*
*Ann brought some delicious egg sandwiches, **and** Tim brought his famous chocolate brownies.*
- to separate a non-identifying relative clause (i.e. a clause giving extra information which is not essential to the meaning of the main clause) from the main clause.
e.g. *Maria, who is a ballerina, lives in Paris.*
The local market, where you can buy exotic spices, is located on the High Street.
- after certain linking words/phrases (e.g. *in addition to this*, *for example*, *however*, *in conclusion*, etc.).
e.g. *In addition to this, Fred is a collector of antique watches.*
- when if-clauses begin sentences.
e.g. *If we had taken her advice, we wouldn't have got lost.*
Note: No comma is used, however, when the if-clause follows the main clause.
- before and/or after expressions such as: *he/she said*, *said Tom/Mary*, etc. when reporting someone's exact words.
e.g. *Opening the door, he said, "Wake up children, it's time to get ready for your trip."*
but: *"I am exhausted," said the firefighter.*
- to separate question tags from the rest of the sentence.
e.g. *Ms Jones is your history teacher, isn't she?*

QUESTION MARK (?)

A question mark is used:

- to end a direct question.
e.g. *How old are you?*
Note: A question mark is not used to end an indirect question.
e.g. *He asked me how old I was.*

EXCLAMATION MARK (!)

An exclamation mark is used:

- to end an exclamatory sentence, i.e. a sentence showing admiration, surprise, joy, anger, etc.
e.g. *That's great news!*
What a beautiful baby!

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QUOTATION MARK (' ' " ")

A quotation mark is used:

- in direct speech to report the exact words someone said.
e.g. *'My flight is leaving at 9am,' said Pamela.*
'Where are you from?' he asked us.
- for quotations (i.e. phrases taken from books, plays, etc), sayings and proverbs.
e.g. *All in all, I believe that life would be boring without music. As Robert Fripp once said, "music is just a means of creating a magical state."*
My grandfather used to say that 'an apple a day, keeps the doctor away.'

COLON (:) :

A colon is used:

- to introduce a list.
e.g. *There were four of us on the boat : my mother, my father, my cousin Jane and me.*

SEMICOLON (;)

A semicolon is used:

- instead of a full stop, sometimes to separate main sentences when their meaning is connected.
Semicolons are not used as frequently as full stops or commas.
e.g. *Some teenagers find it extremely hard to choose a career; others consider it a fairly easy choice.*

DOTS (...)

- Three dots are used to show that words have been left out from a quotation, proverb, sentence, etc.
e.g. *As Edward Guthman once said, 'Thirty seconds on the evening news is worth a front page headline ...'*

BRACKETS ()

Brackets are used:

- to separate extra information from the rest of the sentence.
e.g. *These days, you can buy popular newspapers (i.e. The New York Times, Le Monde, etc) almost anywhere in the world.*

APOSTROPHE (')

An apostrophe is used:

- in short forms to show that one or more letters or numbers have been left out.
e.g. *I'm (= I am) writing because I've (= I have) got great news.*
I left for Canada in the summer of '95. (= 1995)
- before or after the possessive -s to show ownership or the relationship between people.
e.g. *Tom's bicycle, my sister's son* (singular noun + 's)
my parents' car (plural noun + ')
women's shoes (Irregular plural + 's)

Study the examples:

e.g. *Look at that peacock! Aren't its feathers beautiful?*
(its = possessive adjective)

but: *It's (= it is) a beautiful day, isn't it?*

Our school is very big. It's got (= it has got) three floors and a huge gymnasium.

- to form the plurals of letters, numbers or abbreviations.
e.g. *She often writes j's instead of g's.*
Package holidays became extremely popular in the 1980's.
UNICEF's efforts to raise money for children living in developing countries have been extremely successful.

HYPHEN (-)

A hyphen is used:

- to form a compound word.
e.g. *kind-hearted; ten-year-old boy; seventy-nine; tape-recording; well-dressed; water-ski; etc.*

DASH (—)

A dash is used:

- in informal English, the same way as a colon or semicolon.
e.g. *There are three things I couldn't imagine living without — my best friend, a good book and my dog.*
- to introduce something that you thought of or added later, or something surprising, unexpected, etc.
e.g. *They're closing down the old library — at least that's what I've heard.*